

STEELHEAD NEWS

A Publication of the Lake Superior Steelhead Association

www.steelheaders.org

Feb/Mar 2017: Issue 393



*Dennis Olson
with a 28" Knife River steelhead*

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Lake Superior Steelhead Association

PO Box 16034

Duluth, MN 55816-0034

LSSA's Mission:

For these reasons and more, the Lake Superior Steelhead Association exists: to protect our rivers and fish; to help preserve Lake Superior and its bounty; to learn more about the resources we enjoy and foster discussion, research and sound fisheries management practices; to educate anglers and the public about all these things. The LSSA has taken all these tasks upon its shoulders. These issues are too important to leave to chance or the vagaries of bureaucracies and politics. Our mission is to protect and improve the cold water fishery of the Lake Superior region and to bring various groups of anglers together in an atmosphere of friendship, so they can work for their and the resources common good.

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Note to Membership:

The membership list is updated just prior to the mailing of new issues of our newsletter, Steelhead News. You can check the mailing label on the front of the issue to confirm that we have correctly processed all current memberships. A couple folks just send in their blank membership cards with a check. Please fill out the membership card. We saw one come through blank and deposited the check and didn't make the update. Please look at the mailing label and if our records are not correct, contact us and we will

make the proper changes. Several folks have duplicated their renewals and if that occurs, we push the renewal date out a year so several folks are paid through 2018 and the mailing label will inform you of that. 2017A and 2018A mean you are current. Anything prior to 2017 means we have not seen your renewal or have incorrectly processed it. Finally, if you have a change of address, please be sure and contact the LSSA with any mailing updates. USPS will not forward the newsletter as we use our bulk permit.

Clarence Heikkila with a brown trout from the Brule in 1957. Photo courtesy of J. Tegeder.



Post Card From the Past



Gary Siverson teaches the essential skill of how to snell a hook.

MEA CULPA Kevin Bovee

When you (LSSA membership) see the 2017 Lake Superior ANGLER coming very soon, inside will be a short piece on the LSSA's 2016 Mentoring project. It came to my attention that I forgot to mention a very important person in the LSSA's mentoring classes--Gary Siverson (above.) Gary has spearheaded the project since its inception and does all the work scheduling mentors/dates at HNC, lining up rods, reels, vests and all the gear needed by the class. Gary deserves a huge "thank you" by us all and a sincere apology from me for not giving him proper credit for the great job that he has done. Sorry Gar. K. Bovee

2017 LSSA Youth Mentoring

Speaking of the 2017 Youth Mentoring, by the time you read this, the first two classroom sessions should be underway or right around the corner. Working again with Hartley Nature Center, Gary Siverson has organized a class of 10 young anglers consisting of 4 young women and 6 young men. Several parents are also scheduled to participate. Marine General helps us provide a high quality drift fishing

set-up for each young angler. This year we plan to hold only one field session on either the Lester or the Knife River, We have found it has been just too difficult to predict river conditions and schedule two days of field instruction, let alone one. Given the warm temperatures, it looks like an early run. Hopefully, we will get the classroom sessions completed before the run has past! If you can dedicate a Saturday morning to help mentor a youngster, contact Gary Siverson at 218-390-3916. It's quite a rewarding experience.

Spring Banquet Location

The 2017 LSSA Spring Banquet will be held at the Clearwater Grille, formerly known as Lakeview Castle, on 5135 North Shore Drive. If you are coming from the south, this is past McQuade Harbor. If coming from the north, it's just past the Talmage. This new location is handy if you are spending the day fishing up the shore, which we all hope will be the case. We are also excited about this new venue because it is much more spacious, with plenty of room to socialize and try your hand at the raffle buckets. See the full page RSVP form elsewhere in this issue for more details.

From the Editor

Thanks to all of you who responded to my plea for material, we have a Feb/ March issue. J. Tegeder came up with a few old photographs, Tom Cawcutt sent me an article with photo's, David Thorpe has produced some new cartoons. The Olson gang came thru again with photos and as always Kevin Bovee has helped out immensely, and forwarded an article by Monte Hoffman with photos from Sam Alvar. However, I still need historic photos, more fishing articles, and photos for the photo gallery. Please consider contributing. Stories can be simply descriptions of a great day out. Photo's need not be of fish. River and Lake Superior scenery is also needed. If you see something in another media source for News and Notes, forward it to me. Text me at 612-669-9601 or e-mail me with articles and photos at scott@scottthorpeflyfishing.com. I am also going to be manning the booth at the Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo along with Vic Stark, Mark Haas, Jim Swan and others. Stop by and help us .

Upcoming Events

Great Waters Fly Fishing Expo
March 17, 18, 19, 2017
Hamline University, St. Paul, MN

LSSA Youth Mentoring Classroom Sessions
March 11, 18, 2017
Hartley Nature Center, Duluth, MN

LSSA Youth Mentoring Field Session
Date to be determined 2017

LSSA Spring Banquet
April 22, 2017
Clearwater Grille, Duluth, MN

LSSA Planking Party
June 24, 2017
Brighton Beach, Duluth, MN

Brule Spey Day
September 9, 2017
McNeil's on the Brule, Brule River, WI

Back in the Olden Days

By Monte Hoffman

Back in the olden days I moved to Duluth and began to make my way in the world. One of the factors that led me to choose Duluth was the fact that from there, steelhead were accessible. As I settled in and began to become accustomed to my new home town, I made a discovery, one that would influence my life profoundly over the coming decades. It was a little tucked away bait shop up on the hill called Jim's Bait. Did I mention that I knew next to nothing about the catching of said steelhead? What I did know was that they lived in the rivers nearby and that I would figure it out no matter what.

A little background is maybe in order here, because in those days Great Lakes steelhead were not a high profile target in the upper Midwest and solid information on the subject was not easy to come by. Arriving in early winter gave me some time, for one of the few things I knew was steelhead fishing around Duluth was a springtime thing. I was even partly right.

In any event, I made my way up to the Bait Shop and over the months made the acquaintance of the characters for whom the Shop was a second home. Many had their own personal coffee cups hanging on the wall. That's the kind of place it was. Chief among the personalities were Jim and Elsie Keuten; owner operators of the best bait shop this fisherman ever passed the portals of. Of course, I never knew it at the time. In those days, Butch Furtman, Jim "Retly Carp" Allen, Bob Blum, a one armed fisherman of amazing abilities, Benny Larson, and others worked at the shop, with Keuten's sons Jim-Jim and Craig regularly demonstrating amazing results and even mind boggling outcomes of otherwise ordinary, mundane Bait Shop chores. The "regulars" included everyone who fished steelhead and stopped in frequently. Among these regulars were some whose ability to catch steelhead was already legendary. It didn't take long for even a neophyte to learn who "they" were. For the purposes of this tale, the names to concern us are Jim and Elsie Keuten, Jerry Tessier, and Robert "Bucko" Buck.

A few years passed. In those days, the learning curve of catching steelhead was pretty steep, but there were plenty of fish around and if you paid attention and put in your hours, the fish started to come. Looking back, it seems surprising that



Jerry Tessier. Note the brown blank Fenwick. In the dy, the brown blank was THE rod to own. Vintage photo courtesy of Seaquest Productions.

I was accepted so readily by this hardcore group of steelheaders who were as secretive a bunch of fishermen as ever was. Equal even to that group of people who entertain themselves picking morel mushrooms. It may have been as simple as the fact that I really loved to fish, as I saw many other newcomers accepted in the same fashion.

There was one specter that was a constant around the Shop. It was always present, even when the local fishing was going hot and heavy. That was the specter of the magical, near mythical West Coast, the Mecca of steelheaders everywhere. Now Jim and Elsie, Jerry and Bucko had been making trips to the "Coast" for many years, expeditions really. Many of them lasted six weeks or even a couple of months or more. The stories

they would spin back home in the Shop had those of us who had never been and were lucky enough to be in the Shop when the stories were told, hanging on every word, every tantalizing name: Castle Rock, Longview, Kelso, Forks, Port Angeles, Cowlitz, Kalama, Lewis, Toutle, Elochoman, Grey's, Hoh, Sol Duc, the Bogachiel. At that time, not everyone could make a trip like that. Family, short vacation time, the great distance and expense involved made it out of reach for most. But those of us who were single and really had the bug found ways and means as you might expect.

Thus, we come to this little saga I wish to tell, a winter trip to the Coast, February/March I do believe. It involved myself and some friends, Jim and Elsie, Jerry and Bucko. We were all staying at Anderson's Resort on Silver Lake, just a couple of miles below the town of Toutle (home of the Fighting Ducks) and the confluence of the North and South forks of the Toutle River, a year or three prior to the eruption of Mt. St. Helen's. On this

Jim Keuten, owner of Jim's Bait. Vintage photo courtesy of Seaquest Productions.



occasion the conditions were good and everybody was into fish, and had been for several days. As you might expect, the mood around camp was good. All was right with the world. A nice bunch of big bright steelhead has that effect don'tcha know.

On this particular night, Elsie had invited the whole crew to dinner, spaghetti and meatballs, I believe. Dinner was over and four of us were playing cribbage. Jerry and I partnered against a couple of my crew and we were playing for money. Now you need to understand that Jerry was the worst-- or is it the best? -- guy around for being secretive about where he got his fish. Not so much about how. He was skilled at all methods of "drifting" for steelhead, but he was the best I ever saw at fishing loose spawn, what we called candy or goobers.

Somebody asked "Jerry, you've fished all over out here. What is your favorite river?" Well he blinked and I figured he would just give some no account answer or ignore the question completely, but he set down his cards, and we were winning. He settled back and looked up at the ceiling. "Well," he said, I believe it was the upper Cowlitz." He looked at Jim and Bucko and they just grinned.

Now the upper Cowlitz to us was the run below the coffer dam and the Blue Creek stretch below that. Fish couldn't pass the coffer dam. We fished it a fair amount because it had big fish, but if it had a little "color" it was an unattractive gray and there was enough garbage on the banks, even a kitchen sink one year, that we referred to it as the Cowtits or just the Cow. After the grins, Jerry looked at us, saw the expressions on our faces and said "Now you have to realize that this was before the dams. The Mayfield dam was the first, so this goes back before 1963. We would drive up there past Randle and up to around Packwood and even beyond, park the car and go fishing. Most of the time we wouldn't see another fisherman, and the fish, my God, those were fish. The fishing we've had these past days wouldn'ta even been worth a mention back then."

He went on for a while longer and Jim and Bob both threw in a few comments. Eventually they ran out of steam, but till then we were hanging on every word. Well, we picked the cards back up and finished the whipping of the opposition. Debts were settled. The get-together broke up for the night and we all retired to our respective beds. It was a while before I could fall asleep for I was rehashing those old stories of the upper Cowlitz over and over in my mind. Those stories of steelhead fishing in their ancestral home, back in the olden days.



2016 BRULE RIVER FALL FISHWAY UPDATE

Steelhead	Brown Trout	Coho Salmon	Chinook (King) Salmon
5,544	4,079	2,323	447

Wisconsin DNR monitored upstream trout and salmon migration with digital video equipment from July 1 through December 11, 2016. The Steelhead count of 5,544 was 44% of the total fall trout and salmon run. One Brook Trout, 13 Pink Salmon, and 22 Splake, were also counted. Nearly half of all Steelhead ranged from 20 to 25-inches long, and 20% were 12 to 17-inches long. 41% of Coho Salmon were 23 to 28-inches long, while 74% of Brown Trout ranged from 18 to 24-inches long. Charts A, B, and C, below, show the fall 2016 counts relative to previous counts and illustrate how the relative run sizes of these naturally reproducing fish fluctuate over time.

FALL FISH COUNTS FOR ALL YEARS OF VIDEO RECORDER OPERATION: 1990-2016

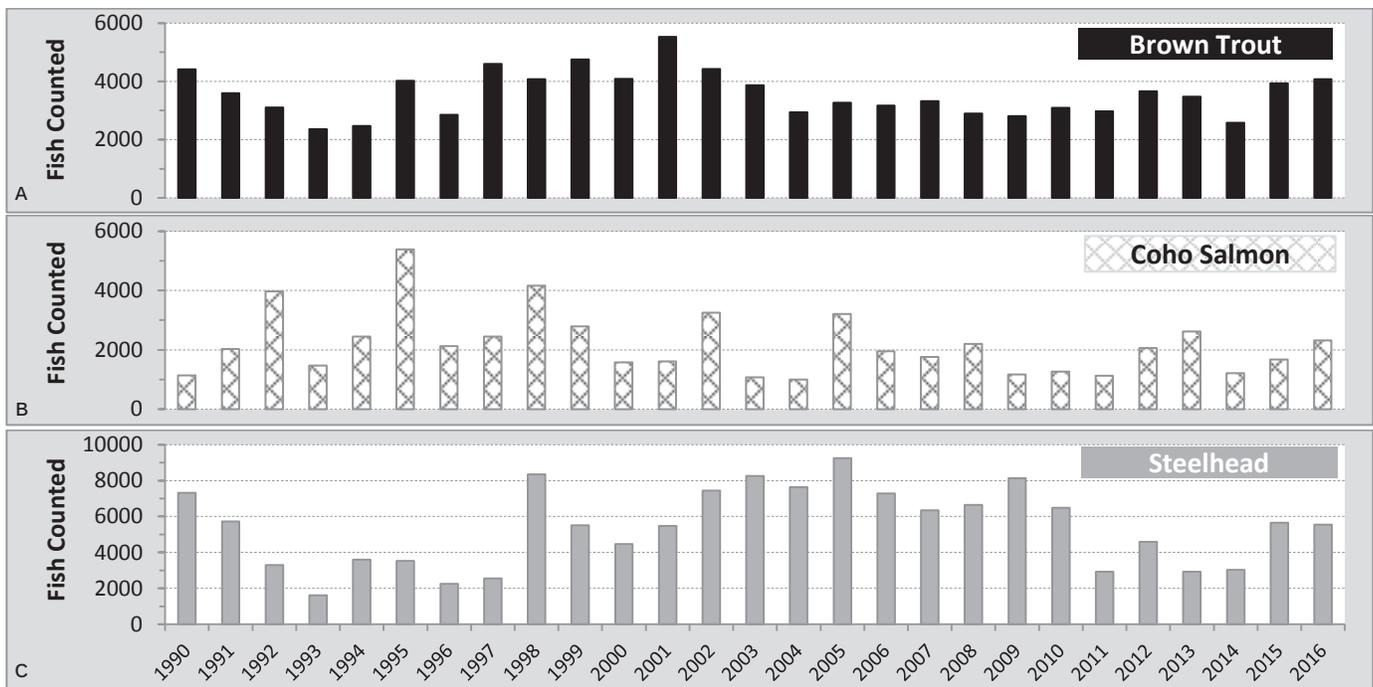
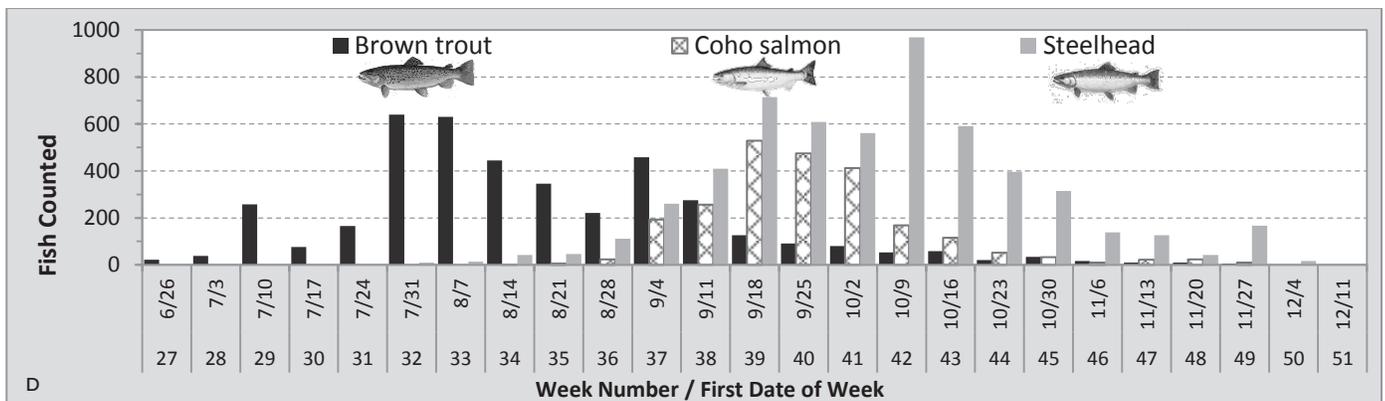


Chart D, below, shows the fall 2016 run timing (i.e., “periodicity”). Brown Trout peaked during early-August, Coho Salmon in mid-September, and Steelhead in mid-October, particularly during the second week with 969 fish.



LSSA 2017

Spring Banquet

dinner, raffle & silent auction



**Saturday
April 22nd, 2017**

Banquet open to LSSA members & guests
Pre-Registration Required - No walk-ups

Raffle and auction items include fishing rods, reels, tackle, clothing, pottery, carvings, restaurant and hotel gift certificates, custom crafted cedar furniture and artwork.

Menu:

Swedish Meatballs with Mushroom Gravy
Herb Roasted Chicken
Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans
Assorted Dinner Rolls
Deluxe House Salad with assorted dressings
Sheet Cake Dessert, Coffee Station
Full Cash Bar

- Clearwater Grille
5135 North Shore Drive,
Duluth, MN 55804
- 5:00 pm
Registration & social hour
- 7:00 pm
Annual meeting & elections
- 7:15 pm
Full dinner buffet
- 8:30 pm
Raffle winners announced

Please RSVP before April 15th

By phone: 218.525.5960
By e-mail: Kevin Bovee outriderduluth@msn.com
Or by mail: LSSA, P.O.Box 16034, Duluth, MN 55816



LSSA Member Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

of tickets: _____ @ \$30. Total enclosed: \$ _____

New Water

By Tom Cawcutt

The hike in was long and the terrain rolled through the rocky bluffs of the MN north shore. Although the path was well worn, we did not know where we were going. To be fair, we knew in our minds eye, but had not seen this portion of the river before. On this day, I followed behind my fishing partner. This is in stark contrast to a typical outing where my enthusiasm drives me into the lead. We ambled down the trail for over a half-hour, building up an unwanted sweat while anxious feelings of the unknown persisted.

We exchanged banter and accusations of being certain we knew where we were headed. These jabs ended with a laugh or a smile, yet questions about our destination were not dispelled.

Without warning, we were headed down the hillside, the familiar sound of fast water the only clue that we had gone far enough. Being there was no clear trail, I called out to Jason, asking if this was the right spot. The roar of the river below caused his reply to be lost in the underbrush and spruce boughs. The descent off the main trail caused us to meander, finding the easiest route down the hill. Getting closer to the river required mindful observation of foot placement and use of any branch "railing" we could find. When we reached the bottom, the river was broken and raging. This was not soft water and, despite the beauty of this new place, we found ourselves intimidated and wondering where to start. The song *Riptide* came to mind while looking at the table-sized, deep water run completely across the river. Below us, the current broke as elevation changes exposed a ledge of boulders. Mist and spray hung in the air.

We decided the run across from us should be attempted, as a drift was possible although crossing



Steelhead about to be released by author Tom Cawcutt.

wasn't. Upstream of us was a pool, the extent of the depth will likely never be known. Jason decided that dredging the bottom of the pool was to his liking. Our rods were quickly assembled for the pursuit of steelhead. I eased into the river until the water lapped just under my knees. The run across from me required a well placed cast in order for the drift to come anywhere close to a fish. It's likely the rocks wrestled with me a few times, but I connected on the

first steelhead of the day in short order. When the fish hit, it was obvious. As we say on the river, "the fish crushed it". My rod surged as the fish instantly hit the surface. The heavy flow of the river, swift pressure, and a thrashing fish caused us to part ways before we could get better acquainted. With a forlorn look, a blank stare of loss filled my face. The humor of fisherman's sayings filled my thoughts. "Well, you cannot catch em all," I chuckled as Jason wanted to know what happened.

Jason Kopp with steelhead from the North Shore.



His questions came in rapid succession as they always do when a fish is lost. During this time, I was retrieving my line to re-tie. Subsequently, my fishing partner made the move downstream to inspect the trough the fish I had just hooked had come from. "Classic," I thought. Lost my fish, my rig, and now my spot!

I will admit, I was selfishly pleased when Jason's first drift landed him a mighty snag. With both of us now needing to regroup, we talked about how to proceed, and what to try. Both of us analyzed the situation differently, but we arrived at the same conclusion. We were going to switch from traditional tactics to running pegged beads. This set-up has been met with varying opinions. Within our circle of anglers, some have accepted the new way and others deem it sacrilege.

There are multiple methods, but for today, we opted to peg a steelhead orange translucent bead about an inch above the hook. We had seen this tactic prove successful with others earlier in the season, but hesitated to switch as yarn is usually our "go to."

Jason was the first to hook up. His usual, "Here we go," filled the canyon walls. I looked up to see his rod arched, and I figured he was snagged. This time his hook was fully imbedded in the jaw of a sizable steelhead who decided to play with us. The fish would scream out mid-river, then bolt back toward shore to rest in the only eddy. I could see the fish finning in the bubbles of the slack water, but without a net, I could not reach it. After a few futile attempts, we finally eased him to the bank. Dark flanked with crimson cheeks, the buck caused a satisfied smile to show on Jason's face. A few pictures were taken, and the river reclaimed this late spring steelhead.

It did not take long until my efforts were rewarded again. Another feisty

buck decided my drift was convincing enough for a taste. The battle was not as long as the previous fish, but nonetheless, still a satisfying reward for our hike in on new trails using new tactics.

As we scampered out of the river bottom that day, our trek toward Highway 61 was bittersweet. The season was over, however, we had learned new water and had success trying something new. We shared stories of the season and transitioned seamlessly into planning the upcoming spring. With the onset of the spring run, we are looking forward to finding new paths, leaving fresh boot prints, and enjoying the steelhead of the north shore.



November 11, 2016
LSSA BOD/Membership Meeting
MINUTES

BOD Present: C. Wistrom, J. Somrock, D. Dahl, G. Siverson, K. Bovee, and M. Pitan. P. Sandstrom also present.

1. Gambling Report: All required reports were submitted for review, discussion and approval. All worksheets needed for report was submitted for review. Motion by Wistrom to accept the gambling report as presented. Motion seconded by Somrock and motion passed. Gambling Manager presented the GCB Star Rating sheet for review. We

rated four stars this year.

2. Treasurer's Report: I good shape presently. Still a couple outstanding advertising invoices from 2016. We send them out with the 2017 bills.
3. Grants Update: PH I 'Final Report' has been submitted. LSOHC will issue letter of acceptance and then the final Reimbursement Request for PH I can be processed. PH II-brief update-last of the trees were planted in Reach 9 today. We will come back in the spring of 2017 top monitor all the plantings in Reach 9/12. PH III-Fiscal Agent discussion. FA to be put in place to allay any issue of conflict of interest. The BOD agreed to accept the agreement with Zeitgeist in principle. Motion by Wistrom to accept the agreement as presented. Motion seconded by Dahl and motion passed. Bovee abstained from the vote.

4. Webpage Update: Will get the article that was printed in the latest Steelhead News to P. Sandstrom, along with photos, to be inserted in the Project page of the site.

5. Brule Spey Day 2017: Looked at various dates. Wanted to miss Bayfield's Apple Fest and maybe try it earlier in the fall. October is very serious fishing time. Just before or after Labor Day made sense.

6. Newsletter: Editor Thorpe is always looking for photos, news, etc. that might be pertinent to the LSSA.

7. MN DNR LSMP: A quickly convened meeting will be held tomorrow night, November 9, in Two Harbors at the community center; 417 So. Avenue. We will have several folks in attendance. Discussion of opening steelhead fishery to a possible kill regulation. BOD opposed to even thinking about that idea. Great damage to the resource could occur in a very short time.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kevin J. Bovee, Secretary



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